

Call for inputs for the preparation of the 2024 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to **Human Rights Council resolution 47/21** on the “**Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality**”

**Written Submission of Groundation Trinidad and Tobago  
To the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to Human Rights  
Council resolution 47/21**

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[Trinidad and Tobago]

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Groundation was founded in 2020 by sociologist Adeola Young. This group is a grassroots social justice organisation committed to the upliftment of communities by co-intentional education and professional skill sharing based on the principles of Groundings with my brothers by Walter Rodney. Groundation has spearheaded the free legal support of and bail fund for protesters in Trinidad and Tobago in the June uprisings against police brutality and extrajudicial police killings of Israel Clinton, Joel Jacobs and Noel Diamond a mere month after the killing of George Floyd in the United States. In June and July 2020, anti-racist and anti-police violence protestors from the overpoliced areas of Laventille, Port of Spain, Beetham Gardens and Morvant were successfully freed by pro bono lawyers from Groundation. Full bail payments without conditions of repayment were also raised for the community. Groundation partnered with the Living Waters community to deliver food hampers and offered social support for the families of those murdered by the police including Ornella Greaves, a pregnant woman who was killed in protest in June 2020. This is continuous effort as cases are still being fought pro bono to this date and families are still supported by food and care item drives.

Publications on Groundation

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/07/06/features/in-the-diaspora/righteous-rage-on-protests-uprisings-against-police-violence-in-trinidad/>

<https://discoversociety.org/2020/08/03/violence-in-the-time-of-covid-dispatches-from-the-caribbean/>

## **INTRODUCTION**

This submission focuses on intersectional discrimination against Africans and people of African descent and advancing racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach. We provide inputs for three questions.

1. What are the main intersectional manifestations of systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent in Trinidad and Tobago?

The institutions of colonial societies are inherently a manifestation of Anti-blackness and racial inequality/inequity. The tools of racism, colourism, classism, geographic location and the economic structure of Trinidad and Tobago has severely impacted the life chances of people of African descent. Systems such as education, healthcare, housing, labour, prisons, security and policing all intersect with the patriarchal gender and sexuality systems.

Gender based violence, misogynoir, homophobia and transphobia against black trans women have resulted in their deaths. <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/man-dressed-in-womens-clothing-found-dead-at-chancellor-hill-6.2.1827181.76267ed696>

There are also a high level of racist, classist and negative narratives about Afro-Trinadians in the media by public personas and on social media. [https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/kpmg-distances-itself-from-manager-s-racist-facebook-rant/article\\_868d0d22-a9ef-11ea-a7a9-cbc191ac6160.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/kpmg-distances-itself-from-manager-s-racist-facebook-rant/article_868d0d22-a9ef-11ea-a7a9-cbc191ac6160.html)

The colonial institutions have continuously had a negative outlook of African phenotypes such as hair texture and hairstyles in schools to be unacceptable. <https://newsday.co.tt/2023/06/28/education-minister-hairstyle-issue-at-trinity-college-unfortunate-regrettable/>

The lack of race disaggregated data on healthcare and labour discrimination has made reporting on this issue difficult despite knowing anecdotes of the experiences of persons of African descent.

The population of urban areas are predominantly persons of African descent such as East Port of Spain. These areas are subject to high unemployment, poor infrastructure/housing, high gang activity, murders, over policing, police brutality and police extrajudicial killings. The police killings of Israel Clinton, Noel Diamond and Joel Jacobs were captured on video a month after the murder of George Floyd <https://www.pca.org.tt/information/press-releases/235>. Persons protested and many were beaten, shot and a pregnant black woman Ornella Greaves was killed. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/07/06/features/in-the-diaspora/righteous-rage-on-protests-uprisings-against-police-violence-in-trinidad/>

<https://newsday.co.tt/2020/06/29/morvant-residents-want-justice-after-police-killings/>

8 police officers were then charged with the murder of those 3 men <https://newsday.co.tt/2022/07/18/8-charged-with-murder-in-2020-morvant-triple-killing/>

Narco-trafficking has influenced the number of illegal firearms and drugs to enter the country. This has resulted in a violent power struggle to control the sale and movement of these illicit items. Hyper capitalism, white collar crime and organised crime has driven a lot of people to

compete for resources. The Anti gang legislation and firearms legislation have further targeted persons of African descent especially in State of Emergencies. Persons were able to sue the state and won cases proving this discrimination exists.

[https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/soe-detainee-awarded-250-000/article\\_e2d12638-945f-11e8-a32f-af8adc53c6dd.html#google\\_vignette](https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/soe-detainee-awarded-250-000/article_e2d12638-945f-11e8-a32f-af8adc53c6dd.html#google_vignette)

<https://newsday.co.tt/2018/05/16/state-to-pay-3m-for-soe-arrest/>

[https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/gang-culture-escalating-in-t-t/article\\_953d7b24-924c-11e8-b2cf-47d178c311c0.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/gang-culture-escalating-in-t-t/article_953d7b24-924c-11e8-b2cf-47d178c311c0.html)

## 2. Who are the main groups affected and which rights are most affected ?

The groups most noticeably affected are the LGBTQ+ community, specifically black trans women, working class and poor persons of african descendants living in urban areas and marginalised communities described as 'hotspot communities', as well as formerly incarcerated. These persons are affected by classism, racism, capitalism and human rights infringements including Gender-Based Violence, police brutality and police extrajudicial killings. Each individual's experience will be compounded by whatever combination of intersections such as gender, colour, sexuality, spatial location that can be weaponized in the colonial anti-black system. When analysing these systems, it is important to look not only at the group impact on human rights, but to also take into account the multi-factorial impact of intersectionality on the lived experience of any marginalised person.

The human rights that are infringed upon are the right to life, the right to no torture, the right to be free from discrimination, the right to liberty and security, and the right to equal protection under the law.

Young black men are killed at a high proportion, families are left in financial and psychological ruin with the frequent passing of loved ones or fear of them being killed. Groups impacted by police brutality, unlawful use of force and extrajudicial police killings are deprived of their right to life, the right to be free from discrimination, the right to liberty and security, and the right to equal protection under the law.

If the police force is unnecessary or excessive, it may also deprive persons of their right to no torture or other ill-treatment. This violation is also prevalent in prisons.

[https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/murder-accused-prisoner-dies-after-prison-fracas/article\\_e3e05408-ee05-11ee-a95b-9f25ad8c0f6e.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/murder-accused-prisoner-dies-after-prison-fracas/article_e3e05408-ee05-11ee-a95b-9f25ad8c0f6e.html)

<https://newsday.co.tt/2024/04/03/autopsy-result-prisoner-beaten-to-death/>

A police commissioner has also publicly promoted violent methods of engaging with the public under "One Shot One Kill", this method has been utilised in the execution of many young black men.

<https://www.ttps.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/Media%20Releases/December%202018/CoP%20Reinforces%20Use%20of%20Force%20Policy%20%E2%80%9COne%20Shot%20One%20Kill%E2%80%9D.pdf>

<https://newsday.co.tt/2018/12/27/griffith-stands-by-one-shot-one-kill/>

3. What are your key recommendations for states and other stakeholders to address intersectional discrimination against Africans and people of African descent?
  - ❖ There must be targeted sociological studies to provide data and statistics on the status of African descendants in relation to systemic racism, colonial institutions and the challenges faced in the education system, healthcare labour , gender etc . This information must also be publicly acknowledged by the state as an issue on the national agenda.
  - ❖ There must be a narrative change to address the class disconnect in describing and understanding the ways in which intersectional discrimination manifests in the lives of people of African descent.
  - ❖ There must be a review of the Anti-gang legislation and the unfair ways it has been used to target citizens and discriminate against persons of African descent
  - ❖ Tr criminal justice system and prison systems must be reviewed to address the human rights infringements that are prevalent
  - ❖ The police force must be demilitarized and use of force policies must be amended to be in line with the respect of human rights to improve community policing.
  - ❖ There must be public education campaigns to address intersectional discrimination, racism, classism , colourism and the negative stereotypes of African descendants for all sectors of society especially narrative makers such as the media.
  - ❖ The state must increase the power of the Police Complaints Authority to prosecute or implement punitive measures to police officers who have engaged in police brutality and extrajudicial killings or displayed unfair, racist/ discriminatory practices in their duties.
  - ❖ National Mental health and Trauma -informed care programs that factor in intersectional discrimination against people of African descent must be implemented to address the psychological violence of systemic institutional and societal racism and anti-blackness .